



First Annual Festival of the Trees

By T. F. Williamson

Along with the annual Christmas tree lighting and the coinciding hayride, Cheshire held a Festival of the Trees celebration. The trees were on display at the former Cheshire Elementary School in the cafeteria and available for viewing throughout December. This year, 2022, was the first of what is planned to be an annual event.

The FOT (Festival of Trees) was the brainchild of Corey McGrath who works for the Town of Cheshire. As many may know, the former Cheshire Elementary School has been in transition. According to Corey, the cafeteria was full of boxes of books left over from the school and a team of town employees were tasked with removing them. Once gone, Corey visualized each of the 13 windows illuminated with the lights of Christmas trees. He took an idea to the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen; have a competition between the Town Departments to decorate a theme-based tree, which would be displayed in the cafeteria. The Board liked the idea, but wanted to expand the competition to the local businesses. The details of the competition were spread across social media and had a great response. It was thought

they might have 20 trees; they ended up with 32.

Each local business or Town department decorated a tree based on the theme of their business/department. The competition included five categories: Most Creative, Fan Favorite, Best Topper, Best Lit, and Funniest.

Throughout December, visitors to the Festival of the Trees could cast votes to be counted after the trees were taken down on January 2, 2023. The winners will be posted on social media and a follow-up will be printed in the next edition of the Chatter.

Due to the overwhelming response to this event, the Town is hoping to increase the entries to 50 trees next year as well as including a wreath making competition; which may be pre-empted by a wreath-making class held at the grade school. The Board of Selectmen are encouraging residents to shop locally and take advantage of the end of season/holiday sales; start preparing now for next year's competition.

Note: see inside for the picture page that includes pictures from the Festival of the Trees as well as other events for the past 2 months.



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Brenda's Thoughts

Wow! Where has the time gone? These past two months have been especially busy with the holidays and trying to wrap up end of year activities at the same time as working on getting new activities started. With that in mind, this article is going to be short because, you know what they say, a picture is worth a thousand words; so I



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took LOTS of pictures and put them in the hands of our newsletter developers to work their "magic." Be sure to check out the picture pages included in this edition of The Chatter.

There are two other main points I want to make before I sign off for the year.

- 1) We are adding some new events in the coming year; starting with a "Paint N Sip" on January 14th. See inside for more details.
- 2) With the increasing cost of fuel, electricity, etc., there is a greater demand for assistance. Look for helpful information inside this issue of The Chatter!

Here's hoping everyone had a wonderful holiday season and I look forward to seeing you in the new year!

Brenda

Qualifying for Heating Assistance

The necessity for fuel assistance is at an all time high and the Berkshire Community Action LIHEAP is here to help.

The fuel assistance program is income based; interested persons should look over the eligibility charts on the next page to see if they may qualify.

Additionally, the following link will take residents to the downloadable fuel assistance forms on the Berkshire Community Action website:

<https://bcacinc.org/fuel-assistance-forms/>



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Do you need help paying your Heating Bills?

Berkshire Community Action may be able to help!

2023 Income guidelines to qualify for Fuel Assistance	
Family Size	Income
1	\$42,411
2	\$55,461
3	\$68,511
4	\$81,561
5	\$94,610
6	\$107,660
7	\$110,107
8	\$112,554
9	\$115,001
10	\$117,448



Call us today!

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¿Usted necesita ayuda para pagar sus facturas de calefacción?

¡Berkshire Community Action Council puede ser capaz de ayudar!

Guías de ingreso de 2023 para calificar para Asistencia de Combustible	
Tamaño de la Familia	Ingreso
1	\$42,411
2	\$55,461
3	\$68,511
4	\$81,561
5	\$94,610
6	\$107,660
7	\$110,107
8	\$112,554
9	\$115,001
10	\$117,448



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A long Journey From Africa to Cheshire

by Patricia Gebarowski

For 48 years Reverend Bill Furey has been the pastor of the Berkshire Union Chapel in Berkshire Village. The congregation meets there every Sunday at 9:30 AM to worship, enjoy fellowship and plan ways for their small community to reach out to those in need.

Bill first learned of the Children's Medical Mission West through his longtime friend and Cheshire native Ellen Biagini McDaniel. One Sunday, in 2004, as Ellen entered the chapel for services she brought with her a small child from the west African country of Burkina Faso. Henri came up the ramp to the chapel with Ellen walking like "a little Charlie Chaplin", Bill says. Henri, born in 1999 came to this country through the Children's Medical Mission at age 5 to have the deformities of bone growth in his hips surgically corrected. At Shriners Hospital in Springfield he underwent that surgery and was placed in a body cast for the next nine months. He returned to Shriners in 2006 for follow-up. All went well over the years, and now, Bill says, Henri "runs like a deer".

Bill became more involved with the Children's Medical Mission and he has made 10 trips to Burkina Faso, twice accompanied by his wife Anne. The volunteers accompany young patients, with various medical afflictions, to and from medical treatment here.

Bill and his chapel congregation raise funds and



collect donations from friends and family to bring over-the-counter medications and other necessities to the treatment center in Burkina Faso.

This is the sixth trip to America for Henri Bienvenue. It is the first Berkshire winter he has known in his 23 years and he's spending it here in Cheshire with Bill and Anne.

Henri grew up in Burkina Faso, raised as a Catholic. He finished secondary school and went on to earn his Bachelors Degree in Computer Science and Engineering from New Dawn University Aude Nouvelle. He is currently teaching online classes in English and computer programming and is establishing his own enterprise as an online tutor. Henri plans to return home when the next semester begins to pursue his studies towards a masters degree from the New Dawn University.

Henri grew up in the capital city of Ouagadougou (Waga-dogo), Burkina Faso and he and his



parents still live there. He speaks fluent English, having learned it in school, although the emphasis there was on reading as much as speaking to help when taking exams. The official language of the country is French from the many years of French colonization. All government and legal affairs are conducted in French. The language Henri grew up speaking was Moore, a dialect spoken by many people of central Burkina Faso around Ouagadougou.

Food insecurity there is a part of life, day-to-day existence a struggle for most. The country is rated as the poorest African nation by the UN. The usual

diet consists of rice, beans, and chicken. For most of his life, Henri had no meals available until after five in the afternoon when he returned home from school.

The medical care in his country is difficult for average citizens to access. Mainly there are hospitals and free standing clinics. The hospitals can be staffed by less skilled caregivers and payment is expected at the time of treatment. The upkeep and general sanitation is not very good, certainly not what we would expect in our Western countries. Henri has had malaria multiple times. If the home remedy of papaya leaf tea and a steam inhalation treatment of the tea is not effective, a visit to the hospital for fluid infusions and medication becomes necessary, but only available to those who can pay. Even a cost of \$25 dollars is beyond the reach of many.

The clinics are generally better managed by more skilled, competent, and qualified doctors and nurses, most of whom are educated and trained in France, but the price is considerably higher so it is not an option for most people.

When he asked what is the best part of life in the United States, Henri said "the air". The air of Ouagedougou is dry, hot, dusty, and polluted. Roads are not paved and the climate is dry and hot most of the year. Clean Berkshire air is a true gift to him.

When asked about his favorite American food he answered "pepperoni pizza" without hesitation. He finds American's life very different from the way children are raised in his land. He especially likes the way people interact as families and the closeness that we share with one another.

Bill, Anne and the congregation of Berkshire Union Chapel have established a nonprofit entity called The African Integrity Mission, to be able to fund various projects and help support the people of Burkina. The median income there is \$600 a year and the average life span is 45 to 50 years for men and 50 to 55 years for women.

Henri Bienvenue, here on his sixth visit to this country, works long hours into the night preparing for his class presentations. He also helps Reverend Furey at the chapel, has learned to operate a snowblower and has been shoveling pathways for his hosts and neighbors. He hopes to complete his masters degree and perhaps pursue a career back in this country, maintaining the deep and caring bonds

that have been created for him here.

For more information:

The African Integrity Mission

PO Box 125,

Cheshire, MA 01225

Attention: Reverend W Furey

Email: fureyanne.william@yahoo.com

The Children's Medical Mission West

15595 Waynesfield Rd.,

Waynesville, OH 45896

Attention: Tammy Shobe

Become a Friend of the Cheshire Council on Aging

The Friends of the Cheshire Council on Aging provide financial and other support serving the needs of the senior population of Cheshire. By become a "Friend" and paying a ten-dollar annual membership fee, you will be supporting the activities of our seniors.

All non-profits are receiving less money from the government so the need to provide financial support from other sources has become critical. The "Friends" support activities that the Town is unable to finance. Here is a partial list of activities the "Friends" have helped financially support this past year:

- A presentations by local authors, speakers and entertainers.
- The annual nonagenarian birthday party.
- The monthly birthday lunches.
- The Cheshire Food Pantry.
- Cultural events such as plays at local theatres and trips to area museums.
- The purchase of ice cream certificates in support of the annual flag ceremony.

As a "Friend," any monetary support provided is most appreciated. For further information, please contact Ed or Pam St. John in one of the following ways:

Mail: 4 Edmunds Street, Unit N101,
Adams, MA 01220

Phone: 413.743.5183

E-mail: estjohn1@roadrunner.com



Festive Fall Fun

Who says Jack-o-lanterns have to be scary? These guys are down-right cute! This was a new event and was such a success, it may become an annual activity.



Winter Wonderland Wreath Wrappers

Nothing says the holidays quite like a door adorned with a beautiful wreath. At this event, 12 wreath makers each created their own beautiful version to usher in the season. Possible candidates for the Festival of Trees wreath competition in 2023?

Another 12 participants made candy Christmas trees; another new event added this year.

First Annual Festival of the Trees

Sunday, December 4th, 2022 was a special night in Cheshire. Besides the annual tree lighting in front of the Cheshire Town Hall, and the hayride that ended with hot cocoa for the participants, the Town hosted its First Annual Festival of the Trees. The event was quite successful and looks to be even bigger next year. Anyone who missed it this year will want to be sure and get out to see it or be a participant in 2023.

Happy Holidays!



A Trip to the Big Apple

Group trips are not an uncommon thing, but there must be a law against having this much fun. New York City goes all out at Christmas and this was a wonderful opportunity to take in the sites, sounds, and food. When and where's the next trip Brenda?



Sarah 'Sadie' Campell and the Gingerbread House

At the east end of Depot street is a quaint house that always reminded me of those gingerbread houses that are so prevalent during this holiday season. [photo by Lee Webb]. Sadie Campbell lived there after her marriage. Here is her obituary from 1971.



Mrs. Sarah Campbell

Funeral services for Mrs. Sarah Louise (Tyrell) Champbell, 90, of 1 Depot St., Cheshire, took place this morning at 11 at the Simmons Funeral Home in North Adams. The Rev. Dr. Paul C. Klose, pastor of the First Baptist Church, officiated. Burial followed in the family lot of Cheshire Cemetery.

Mrs. Campbell was born in Cheshire and spent several years in North Adams. She lived in Cheshire for the past 40 years until her latest illness. She died Saturday evening at the Adams Nursing Home in Williamstown where she had been a patient for the past year.

I never knew Sadie, but Lee

Webb, a former Cheshire resident knew her well. Lee's family by the way lived for years in Hall's tavern across from the Baptist church. Thanks to Lee, we have a photographic record of Sadie's collections of postcards, Victorian era business cards, calling cards, trade advertisements and other memorabilia.

Here are some of my favorites from her collection of calling cards.





In a future issue of the Chatter I will share some of Sadie's collection of local business trade cards. Here are two samples from a Cheshire business.



submitted by Barry Emery

Special Events

January ~ February

January 14th @ noon

Please note this is on a Saturday.
Paint N Sip \$10 at the Senior Center. Snacks and non-alcoholic punch will be provided. Register with Brenda to create an artistic rendering of a *Wintery Scene*.
Call 743-9719 or email coa@chshire-ma.gov.



February 24th 11:30-12:30

Brown Bag distribution at Senior Center

January 19th 10-12

Please note this is on a Thursday.
CHP Mobile Health Van visits Senior Center.

January 27th 11:30-12:30

Brown Bag distribution at Senior Center

January 31st 6:30 p.m.

Basic First Aid demonstration at Senior Center. Free to attend, but pre-registration is recommended.
Call 743-9719.



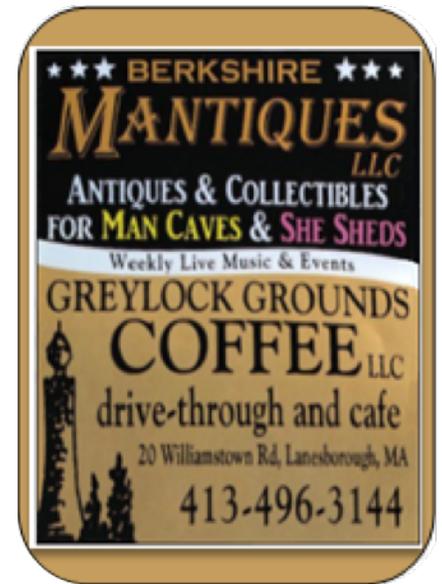
February 2nd @ 1 p.m.

Valentine Card Making with Lorraine at the Senior Center. A fee of \$5 per person. All supplies are provided. Each person gets to make three cards.



February 16th 10-12

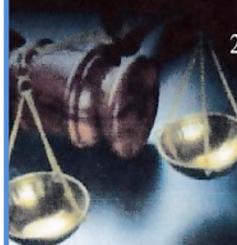
Please note this is on a Thursday.
CHP Mobile Health Van visits Senior Center.



Cheshire Lions Club -

The Cheshire Lions Club remains an active contributor to our community during these trying times. We are always looking for new members. Among our contributions, we support ongoing eye research efforts. We have also supported numerous local organizations such as the Youth Center, the Friends of the Cheshire Council on Aging, the Cheshire Fire Department and various charitable organizations and athletic teams. We donate annual scholarships to Cheshire graduates from Hoosac Valley High School, McCann Technical School and BART. Every year, during the Christmas season, we conduct our Give A Gift program to provide those in need, local families and seniors, with Christmas gifts. Our club also installs and cares for the American flags located throughout the town. If you are interested in joining or would like more information or have any questions, please contact Jennifer Waterman at jen@watermanexcavating.com.

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~ Community Notes ~

Cheshire Pantry In collaboration with the Cheshire Fire Department- The Cheshire Pantry is located in the kitchen of Cheshire Elementary School. It is open to any Cheshire resident of any age on the first Saturday of every month from 11 am to 12 noon. Pick up will occur in the circle in front of Cheshire School. Delivery is available to anyone without transportation. Emergency food is also available by calling 743-5028.

Monetary donations and nonperishable food may still be left at the Senior Community Center for later pick up by Pantry personnel.

Town Clerk- Town of Cheshire Annual Town Census will be mailed mid-January. Please make any necessary corrections, sign the form and return to the Clerk's Office. The Census Return may be mailed or use the "drop-box" at the Church Street entrance to the Town Hall.

Cheshire Library - below is a brief list of some of the upcoming events we hope to hold in the next month or so

- Story Time for pre or home-schoolers is held EVERY Tuesday at 11 am at the library
- Will be holding our annual winter Reading event starting in January 2023
- Will be hosting another card making event with Lorraine Faucher in February
- An evening embroidered bookmark session will take place in January
- Will be continuing STEM/STEAM nights for our younger patrons to come and take advantage of our STEM library or participate in an event challenge
- Cheshire Library will be celebrating 125years of serving the people of Cheshire. An extensive list of events that will be spread out throughout 2023 will be announced after the new year. This is a BIG anniversary for us and we want to celebrate with the community all of 2023
- Find specific dates/times of all our Cheshire Library sponsored Events on our Facebook page.

Historical Commission - The Cheshire Historical Commission mourns the loss our long-time valued colleague and friend, Vern Emerson. Vern was very knowledgeable - and very modest. He never wanted his name attached to his considerable work on our town's history and mystery.

Thank you, Vern. You will always be missed, The Commission's presentation in Cheshire's Festival of Trees featured "ornaments" of our town's historic buildings.

The Ladies Reading Club of Cheshire is the oldest continually meeting reading club in the US. We are carrying on a tradition first inspired by Emma Petitchlerc in 1879. We meet every 2 weeks on Thursdays via Google Meet. For the winter we are meeting remotely to ensure that our members stay safe and avoid the circulating viruses as much as possible. To participate in a Google Meeting you only need an email and to be available from 4-6 pm every other Thursday. We are a reading club, not a book club so we read together at meetings. If you would like to drop in on a meeting and see if it's for you, call Pat Gebarowski, President, at 413-743-2177.

The Community Book Club is growing and it meets on the second Thursday of each month in the Cheshire Senior Center at 6:30 p.m.

The most recent meeting was Thursday, December 8th when the book "A Man Called Ove," by Frederick Backman was discussed.

The next meeting is Thursday, January 12th, 2023 with "Ruth," by Nina Totenberg as the selected reading.

The book club meets again on Thursday, February 9th to discuss "Verity," by Colleen Hoover.

If anyone is interested in joining The Community Book Club, contact John Bianchi through his e-mail: jbianchi429@verizon.net.

*Peace on Earth
Good Will
to All Mankind*

Cheshire COA Center for Active Living

CHP Mobile Health Van - The CHP medical van is scheduled to visit Cheshire once a month. Please follow our Facebook page for dates and times. If you need any non-emergency medical attention or have medical questions stop by and ask the CHP Mobile Health Unit staff. No appointments needed and open to anyone. You may also call Brenda with any questions at the COA office @ 413-743-9719



Cheshire COA Van -The COA Cheshire Center for Active Living van is available Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. Please call 24 hours before to schedule a ride. A \$3.00 donation is appreciated. Call: (413) 446-2559.

The Café at 119 School Street, Cheshire - Hot Lunch for Seniors - The Elder Services lunches will be served Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays inside at 11:30am with the Grab n Go meals to continue five days a week if there is a need. To reserve your meal, call 743-9719 at least 24 hours in advance. Suggested Meal Donation of \$3.00 for those 60 and over.

Bingo - Every Tuesday at 12:30, \$1 per card

Blood Pressure readings - Blood pressure readings with Mal and Carol offered Mon, Wed, Fri 10-11

The Community Book Club - The group meets on the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm in the Senior Center. All are welcome to attend. Anyone who attends will get future email reminders. Books will be determined two months in advance.

Brown Bag - Free paper bag of food available on Friday, January 27th and Friday, February 24th between 11:30am and 12:30pm. Contact Brenda to sign up.

Morning Exercise - 9am -10am Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

Chair Yoga - 10am - 11am Fridays led by Maryanne Kuffs

Foot Clinic - The Foot Clinic is held inside the Center once every two months. Next service to be offered on Thursday, January 19th, 2023. Sorry, no walk-ins - appointments only. Call Brenda @ 413-743-9719 to schedule an appointment and for protocol. There is a fee for this clinic.

Quilting - Quilting with Betty 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month 1:00-3:30 (\$5 suggested donation to benefit the Cheshire pantry)

Cheshire Senior Club - The Cheshire Senior Club meets every Wednesday at 12:30 after lunch at the Senior Center. Please feel free to drop in and join us. Our group goes out to lunch once a month usually on the third Thursday of the month to different area restaurants. We also sprinkle in a few side trips during the year including apple picking, farm tours and shopping trips. We are just a bunch of friends that enjoy hanging out and doing fun things. If this sounds interesting to you call Gene at 743-2177 for more information.



January

Cheshire COA Calendar of Events

2023



Photo by: Gene Gebarowski, Winter's Frosting

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 New Year's Day	2 New Years Day State Holiday	3 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	4 Exercise 9-10 Coffee Hour 10-11 Lunch 11:30 Senior club 12:30	5 Grab-n-Go 10-12	6 Exercise 9-10 Chair Yoga 10-11 Grab-n-Go 10-12	7 Cheshire Pantry 11-12 Elementary School
8	9 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30	10 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	11 Exercise 9-10 Coffee Hour 10-11 Lunch 11:30 Senior club 12:30	12 Grab-n-Go 10-12 Quilting 1-3:30	13 Exercise 9-10 Chair Yoga 10-11 Grab-n-Go 10-12	14 Paint N Sip Starts at Noon Senior Center
15	16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day State Holiday	17 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	18 Exercise 9-10 Coffee Hour 10-11 Lunch 11:30 Senior club 12:30	19 Grab-n-Go 10-12 CHP Van 10-12 Foot Clinic	20 Exercise 9-10 Chair Yoga 10-11 Grab-n-Go 10-12	21
22	23 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30	24 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	25 Exercise 9-10 Coffee Hour 10-11 Lunch 11:30 Senior club 12:30	26 Grab-n-Go 10-12 Quilting 1-3:30	27 Exercise 9-10 Chair Yoga 10-11 Grab-n-Go 10-12 Brown Bag 11:30	28
29	30 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30	31 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30 Basic First Aid 6:30 PM	Blood pressure readings available M-W-F 10-11			

February

2023

Cheshire COA Calendar of Events



Photo by: T. F. Williamson; Snow Cone

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Exercise 9-10 Coffee Hour 10-11 Lunch 11:30 Senior club 12:30	2 Ground Hog Day Grab-n-Go 10-12 Card Making 1 pm	3 Exercise 9-10 Chair Yoga 10-11 Grab-n-Go 10-12	4 Cheshire Pantry 11-12 Elementary School
5	6 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30	7 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	8 Exercise 9-10 Coffee Hour 10-11 Lunch 11:30 Senior club 12:30	9 Grab-n-Go 10-12 Quilting 1-3:30	10 Exercise 9-10 Chair Yoga 10-11 Grab-n-Go 10-12	11
12	13 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30	14 Valentine's Day Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	15 Exercise 9-10 Coffee Hour 10-11 Lunch 11:30 Senior club 12:30	16 Grab-n-Go 10-12 CHP Van 10-12	17 Exercise 9-10 Chair Yoga 10-11 Grab-n-Go 10-12	18
19 Washington's Birthday State Holiday	20 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	21 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	22 Exercise 9-10 Coffee Hour 10-11 Lunch 11:30 Senior club 12:30	23 Grab-n-Go 10-12 Quilting 1-3:30	24 Exercise 9-10 Chair Yoga 10-11 Grab-n-Go 10-12 Brown Bag 11:30	25
26	27 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30	28 Exercise 9-10 Lunch 11:30 Bingo 12:30	Blood pressure readings available M-W-F 10-11			